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Rashīd, Ḥassan

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Rashīd, Ḥasan (Aḥmad)

(*b* Cairo, 10 July 1896; *d* Cairo, 25 May 1969). Egyptian composer. As a boy in Cairo he played the violin, which he continued to study for many years, both in Egypt and in England, where his wealthy family sent him to be educated: he read agriculture at Durham University, also singing baritone and composing. In 1918 he returned to Cairo and married Bahīga Sidqī, the pianist and composer of children's songs. The Rashīds were among the most active members of the Egyptian Amateur Music Association, which they founded with others in 1942, the aim of the organization being to spread the appreciation of classical Western and new Egyptian music. Besides performing in the association's concerts, Rashīd began to compose vocal music to Arabic texts, an activity which culminated in his single opera *Antony's Death*, to the first part of Aḥmad Shawqī's *Cleopatra's Death*. This was the first opera composed by an Egyptian with an Arabic text and subject. Parts of it were produced in 1942 and again in 1973 (by the Egyptian Opera Troupe); the overture is sometimes played as a concert piece, and the aria 'Isis, O fount of tenderness' is also often performed separately. Rashīd was influenced by the Italian opera performed in Cairo, yet his melodic invention is not without originality. However, the Egyptian public found it difficult to accept the conventions of Western operatic style, particularly when associated with familiar poetry in Arabic, and Rashīd's opera has had few successors. He also composed numerous songs, of which the collection *Songs for Youth*, by him and his wife Bahīga, was published; *Isti'ṭāf* (Invocation) is one of the best examples of his style, also *Time*, with a piano part that has an essential role in creating atmosphere.

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